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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EP AND EAP/CM
NSC FOR DENNIS WILDER

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [HK](#)
SUBJECT: JUNE 4 CANDLELIGHT VIGIL IN HONG KNG

REF: JUNE 4 ZAISER-GOLDBERG EMAIL

Classified By: E/P Section Chief Simon Schuchat; Reasons 14 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary: According to ong Kong's "Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China," their annual candlelight vigil to commemorate the anniversary of the June 4, 1989 military suppression in Beijing's Tiananmen Square drew a crowd of 44,000 on Sunday evening, slightly short of last year's attendance of 45,000. Alliance organizers and other Hong Kong-based democracy activists, including Han Dongfang, Robin Munro, and Lee Cheuk-yan, expressed delight at the turnout and noted the importance of continuing to mark this anniversary. Veteran democracy activist and Alliance Chairman Szeto Wah addressed the vigil, followed by broadcasts of recorded messages from the Tiananmen Mothers organization and Tiananmen Square leader Wang Dan. Earlier on June 4, Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen led a prayer session during which he called on the Beijing government to "return a fair judgment" to those who had sacrificed their lives in the incident. Meanwhile, Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang, traveling with a business delegation in southern China, opined publicly that during the seventeen years since June 4, 1989, the economic growth in the mainland had "brought prosperity and economic benefits to Hong Kong" and the intervening time allowed the Hong Kong people "to reflect on the incident in an objective perspective." Tsang also denied press reports that he had attended a May 1989 pro-democracy concert in Hong Kong, just a few days prior to the June 4 crackdown. End Summary.

12. (C) On June 4, Hong Kong's "Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China" organized their annual candlelight vigil to commemorate the anniversary of the June 4, 1989 military suppression of pro-democracy demonstrators in Beijing's Tiananmen Square. As such ceremonies are banned in the PRC, the Hong Kong event is the only large-scale activity held to mark this anniversary. According to press reports and the vigil's organizers, the 90-minute rally drew a crowd of 44,000, which despite forecasts of rainy weather was nearly equal to last year's attendance of 45,000. Alliance Vice Chair and Legco member Lee Cheuk-yan told the media that he was "delighted" with the turnout. Also attending the event, independent democratic Legislative Council member "Longhair" Leung Kwok-hung told poloff that he was quite happy and impressed with the turnout.

13. (SBU) Veteran democracy activist and Alliance Chairman Szeto Wah addressed the vigil, followed by broadcast of recorded messages from the "Tiananmen Mothers" organization and Tiananmen Square leader Wang Dan. This year, in addition to the past themes of "release imprisoned dissidents," "reverse the unjust verdict of June 4," "end one-party rule," and "build a more democratic China," the speakers added a new topic: "support the civil rights campaign in mainland China." Numerous organizations, including the "Hong Kong Human

Rights Monitor," "Project Civil Referendum," "The Frontier," "Human Rights in China," the "Civil Human Rights Front," and "Falun Gong" participated in the event. The crowd included many elderly as well as young people, with numerous families with children attending as well.

Cardinal Zen Comments

¶4. (SBU) Hong Kong Cardinal Joseph Zen led a prayer session attended by about 120 people prior to the vigil, during which he called on the Beijing government to "return a fair judgment" to those who had sacrificed their lives in the incident. Also on June 4, Zen, in an interview with the "New York Times," asked rhetorically "if they (the PRC Government) had listened to the kind advice of the students and workers, would today's country be a better country?" Zen did not attend the candlelight vigil.

Han Dongfang: "We Must Not Forget"

¶5. (C) On June 5, "China Labour Bulletin" Director Han Dongfang, who was imprisoned on counter-revolutionary charges in the PRC following the June 1989 Tiananmen military crackdown, told poloff that continuation of the annual candlelight vigil in Hong Kong was very useful and extremely important; otherwise, there would be no pressure at all on the PRC government. He believed that "morally, we must not forget these important historical incidents." Han said that while he did not focus on the number of participants in the annual vigil, he nevertheless had been "surprised" at the previous day's heavy turnout. Han's colleague, Robin Munro,

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told poloff that the turnout was "quite impressive" for a 17-year anniversary, and opined that the 20-year commemoration in 2009 would bring a much larger number of participants.

Press Coverage

¶6. (SBU) The Hong Kong media gave the event prominent text and pictorial coverage. In a June 5 editorial, the independent "Hong Kong Economic Journal" expressed confidence that the verdict on the June 4 incident eventually would be reversed. The pro-democracy "Apple Daily" said the candlelight vigil demonstrated the continuing opposition of the Hong Kong people to the 1989 crackdown in Beijing. The independent "Ming Pao" called on the Beijing government to adopt a humanitarian approach and to offer compensation to the people who were killed, injured, or arrested, as a means to achieve social harmony. The pro-Beijing "Ta Kung Pao" and "Hong Kong Commercial Daily" did not cover the event, while the pro-Beijing "Wen Wei Po" focused on the "unenthusiastic response" of the Hong Kong people and the "overstated" turnout claims made by the vigil's organizers.

Where Was Donald?

¶7. (C) Hong Kong Chief Executive Donald Tsang, leading an 80-member delegation of business leaders, departed from Hong Kong on June 2 for a visit to Guangxi and Yunnan Provinces. Speaking to the press in Kunming on June 4, Tsang said that in the seventeen years since June 4, 1989, the economic growth in the mainland had "brought prosperity and economic benefits to Hong Kong." That time also allowed the Hong Kong people "to reflect on the incident in an objective perspective." On June 5, Tsang denied press reports, quoting Szeto Wah, that he had attended a May 27, 1989 pro-democracy concert in Hong Kong, just a few days prior to the June 4 crackdown. Tsang said that he happened to be dining in the vicinity of the concert on that evening, but had not attended the event. At that time, Tsang was a director of

administration in the Hong Kong colonial government and was
barred from joining political activities.

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